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ABSTRACT

Reform efforts in the Chicago (Illinois) public schools represent a radical experiment in decentralization. Half of the 411,000 children in the Chicago public schools never graduate and tens of thousands receive diplomas even though they are scarcely able to read, write, or compute. Recognition of the deplorable shape of the city's schools led to the reform efforts that resulted in the creation of local school councils composed primarily of parents. While other school systems have attempted reforms on a large scale, none has attempted to decentralize as thoroughly or as rapidly as has Chicago. A chronic lack of funds and enormous social problems have undermined the Chicago schools over the years, but there are other barriers to reform that come out of poorly written legislation, politics, and the problems of a swollen bureaucracy. The history of current reform efforts is traced, and some solutions are offered to the problems confronting the Chicago schools. In spite of all the problems, the Chicago reform efforts do illustrate the possibility of change when people are determined to improve the schools. A list of 35 resources is attached. (Contains 56 references.) (SLD)

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